1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

827 A hiccough is supposed to be the result of inadvertently swallowing a tree lizard, whose call rather resembles the sound of a person hiccoughing.

The condition popularly called "pins and needles" or described as an arm or leg "going to sleep" is believed by the Andamanese to be due to the bite of a rat. If a man wakes up in the night with one of his limbs benumbed in this way, he believes that a rat has bitten him while he slept.

The Andamanese say that the bite of a civet-cat (*Paradoxurus*) will produce cramp. I was once told that if a man eats the flesh of the civet-cat and then goes into the water he will become "lame." This means, I think, that he will have cramp, and so will be unable to swim.

278 The flesh and particularly the fat of the flying fox (*Pteropus*) is believed to be a remedy for rheumatism. An old man who was suffering from this ailment once asked me to shoot for him some of these bats, which he cooked and ate.

784 If turtle-fat be permitted to burn in the fire there will be a storm.

751 Mention has already been made of the magical value attributed to human bones. They are esteemed as a means of
755 driving away spirits, and therefore of curing or preventing sickness. A human jaw-bone was hanging in my hut in such a position that it could swing in the wind. The natives attributed to this the illness from which I and several of them were suffering at the time, and asked me to put the bone away in a basket, where it could not move.

Bones of animals are made into ornaments in the same way as human bones, and magical properties of a similar kind seem to be attributed to them.

755 Of other objects possessing magical properties the most
● 372 important is fire. Fire is believed to have the power of keeping away spirits of the sea and of the forest. A fire is always kept alight beside a sick man or woman. For dysentery stones are heated in a fire and the patient is required to defecate on to these.

000 In conclusion, mention must be made of one favourite remedy

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to act as the object of such a sentiment, and he therefore feels his dependence upon the society not directly but in a number of indirect ways. The particular way with which we are now concerned is that the individual experiences this feeling of dependence towards every important possession of the society, towards every object which for the society has constant and important uses.

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The most prominent example of such an object is fire. It may be said to be the one object on which the society most of all depends for its well-being. It provides warmth on cold nights; it is the means whereby they prepare their food, for they eat nothing raw save a few fruits; it is a possession that has to be constantly guarded, for they have no means of producing it, and must therefore take care to keep it always alight; it is the first thing they think of carrying with them when they go on a journey by land or sea; it is the centre around which the social life moves, the family hearth being the centr. of the family life, while the communal cooking place is the centre round which the men often gather after the day's hunting is over. To the mind of the Andaman Islander, therefore, the social life of which his own life is a fragment, the social well-being which is the source of his own happiness, depend upon the possession of fire, without which the society could not exist. In this way it comes about that his dependence on the society appears in his consciousness as a sense of dependence upon fire and a belief that it possesses power to protect him from dangers of all kinds.

The belief in the protective power of fire is very strong. A man would never move even a few yards out of camp at night without a fire-stick. More than any other object fire is believed to keep away the spirits that cause disease and death. This belief, it is here maintained, is one of the ways in which the individual is made to feel his dependence upon the society.

Now this hypothesis is capable of being very strictly tested by the facts, for if it is true we must expect to find that the same protective power is attributed to every object on which the social life depends. An examination of the Andamanese beliefs shows that this is so, and thereby confirms the hypothesis.

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In their daily life the Andamanese depend on the instrinsic qualities of the materials they use for their bows and arrows and

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
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length of string is taken and the two ends tied together, the loop thus formed being placed over the big toe as the woman sits on the ground.

The knot used in netting is that known as the fisherman's knot. in use all over the world. The needle is held in the right hand. is passed from above downwards through the loop marked *a* in the figure, and is drawn through far enough to leave a new loop *b* of the required size. This loop is held between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, the uniformity in mesh being apparently obtained largely by the sense of touch. The needle is then passed through the new loop *b* again from above and is drawn out leaving a loop *c*, through which the needle is passed once more, forming the finished knot, which is then drawn taut.

When netting is made for personal apparel it is generally ornamented with strips of *Dendrobium* skin worked in with the thread in the course of the netting. Netting for personal ornaments consists of a sort of bag open at both ends. Each end is tied with a string passed through the ultimate loops, and this string serves to tie the band of net round the waist or neck or wrist or knee.

Fishing nets are attached to a handle. The handles of the Little Andaman Division and those of the Great Andaman Division are different in shape. The Great Andaman net with its hoop can be folded up compactly for carriage, while that of the Little Andaman cannot.

The nets of rope formerly used in the Great Andaman for catching turtle have been already described.

Domestic Implements and Utensils.

The Andamanese are perhaps the only people in the world who have no method of their own of making fire. At the present time they obtain matches from the Settlement of Port Blair, and a few of them have learnt, either from Burmese or from Nicobarese, a method of making fire by the friction of pieces of split bamboo. Formerly, however, they had no knowledge of any method by which fire could be produced. Fires were and still are carefully kept alive in the village, and are carefully carried when travelling. Every hunting party carries its fire with it. The natives are very skilful in selecting wood that will smoulder for a long time without going out and without breaking into flame.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

372 **Fire.**—1. It would seem that the Andamanese, like the quondam aborigines of Tasmania, have always been ignorant of the art of producing fire.

2. The assertion[1] that these tribes when first discovered, assuming that this refers to either the second or ninth century,[2] were ignorant of the use of fire may or may not be correct; but if any faith can be placed in the traditions held by them on the subject, their acquaintance with it dates from no later period than the Creation![3]

3. The most satisfactory conjecture as to the source whence they first obtained fire appears to me to be based on the fact of there being two islands attached to the group, one of which (Barren Island) contains an active volcano, and the other (Narcondam Island[4]) a now extinct one.

4. Being strangers to any method of producing a flame, they naturally display much care and skill in the measures they adopt for avoiding such inconvenience as might be caused by the extinction of their fires.

5. Both when encamped and while journeying, the means employed are at once simple and effective. When they all leave an encampment with the intention of returning in a few days, besides taking with them one or more smouldering logs, wrapped in leaves if the weather be wet, they place a large burning log or faggot in some sheltered spot, where, owing to the character and condition of the wood invariably selected on these occasions, it smoulders for several days, and can be easily rekindled when required. Decayed pieces of the *Croton argyratus*, and two species of *Diospyros*,[5] and a fourth, called by them *chôr-*, but not yet identified, are chiefly used as fuel. As may be inferred, all labour of splitting and chopping is saved, as it is only necessary

[824]

[1] *Vide* Brown.

[2] *Vide* Part I (commencement).

[3] *Vide post* "Mythology," paragraphs 5 and 6.

[4] Regarding this island, which is sometimes shown as Narkandam, Colonel Yule, in his "Marco Polo," writes as follows:—

"Abraham Roger tells us that the Coromandel Brahmins used to say that the *Rakshasas* or Demons had their abode 'on the Island of Andaman, lying on the route from Pulicat to Pegu,' and also that they were man-eaters. This would be very curious if it were a genuine old Brahminical *Saga*; but I fear it may have been gathered from the Arab seamen. Still it is remarkable that a strange weird looking island, which rises, covered with forest, a steep and regular volcanic cone, straight out of the deep sea to the eastward of the Andaman group, bears the name of *Narkaudam* in which one cannot but recognise नरक, (*Narak*), 'Hell.'

Can it be that in old times, but still contemporary with Hindu navigation, this volcano was active, and that some Brahmin St. Brandon recognised in it the mouth of Hell, congenial to the Rakshasas of the adjacent group?"

Colonel Yule adds: "I cannot trace any probable meaning of Andam, yet it looks as if *Narak-a-dám* and *Andám-da* were akin."

[5] Bastard ebony or marble wood.

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to beat a log of this description on a stone or other hard substance a few times before it breaks up into as small pieces as are needed.

6. In each hut that is occupied there is invariably a fire, the object of which is to keep the owner warm, to drive away insects, and to cook food, while the smoke is useful in preserving the store of provisions, which are placed about two feet above it for that purpose.[1]

7. Council fires, or fires burnt on special occasions, are not among their institutions; even the household fire is not held sacred, or regarded as symbolical of family ties, and no rites are connected with it; there are no superstitious beliefs in reference to its extinction or pollution, and it is never employed literally or figuratively as a means of purification from uncleanness, blood, death, or moral guilt.

8. Fires are generally kindled by fanning the embers with a frond of the *Asplenium nidus* (*pâ·tla-*), and they are extinguished by pressing the burning logs against some such object as a tree, canoe, or stone.

9. Reference must here be made to the mis-statement which has found its way into several papers concerning the existence of so-called "oven-trees" among the Andamanese. The belief appears to have originated in the practice which prevails among them of taking advantage, during brief halts, of the natural shelter afforded by the peculiar formation of the roots of the *Pterocarpus dalbergioides*, and trees of the *Ficus* genus, so common in these islands, and which, extending like buttresses on all sides of the trunk, are, especially when roofed over with a light thatch such as these people are accustomed to make in a few minutes, capable of accommodating small parties suddenly overtaken by a storm, or needing a temporary resting-place: the traces of fires lighted by successive parties against these trees, and the hollows thus caused, having been noticed, the opinion was formed, and, without sufficient corroborative evidence, promulgated, that they were "purposely charred," and that "great pains is taken in their preservation."[2] As a matter of fact, the Andamanese no more employ oven-trees than do the gypsies in Bulgaria, alluded to by General Pitt-Rivers, F.R.S.,[3] who, using constantly the same trees, have formed a semi-cylindrical chimney, which might reasonably be regarded, by one unacquainted with their habits, as an attempt to form an oven.

10. While it is the women's business to collect the wood, the duty of maintaining the fires, whether at home or while travelling

[1] *Vide ante* "Habitations" paragraph 5.
[2] *Vide* Mouat, pp. 308–9.
[3] *Vide* Journ. Anthrop. Inst., vol. xi. pp. 273 and 290 (Appendix I).

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

372 by land or sea, is not confined to them, but is undertaken by those of either sex who have most leisure or are least burdened.

11. Probably nothing introduced by us so impressed them with the extent of our power and resources as *matches;* that we should be able to produce fire with such ease and by such means was not unnaturally regarded as evidence of our being superhumanly gifted.

372 776 **Superstitions.**—1. Fire is supposed to possess the power of driving away evil spirits: when, therefore, at night they hear in imagination the approach of the dreaded *.ē'rem-chàu'gala*,[1] they throw burning logs into the jungle surrounding the encampment. Again, should any of the community have occasion to leave their huts at night, no matter how short the distance, he (or she) invariably takes some fire as a protection against any demons that may be in the vicinity; a torch is also taken if it be very dark at the time.

[821] 2. Of darkness they assert that it was instituted on account of the misconduct of two of their ancestors, as will shortly be mentioned.[2]

776 784 821 3. From fear of displeasing *mai'a .ō'gar-*[3] (Mr. Moon), during the first few evenings of the third quarter, when he rises after sundown, they preserve silence, cease from any work on which they may be engaged—even halting should they be travelling—and almost extinguish any light or fire which they may be burning. This is owing to the belief that he is jealous of attention being distracted to other objects than himself at such a time, or of any other light being employed than that which he has been graciously pleased to afford so abundantly. By the time the moon has ascended a few degrees, however, they restore their fires and resume their former occupations, as they consider they have then sufficiently complied with *mai'a .ō'gar-*'s wishes and requirements. The glowing aspect of the full moon on its first appearance above the horizon is supposed to indicate that *mai'a .ō'gar-* is enraged at finding some persons neglecting to observe these conciliatory measures; there is also an idea that, if he be greatly annoyed, he will punish them by withdrawing or diminishing the light of his countenance.

776 821 4. Regarding meteorolites they appear to possess no superstition. Shooting stars and meteors they view with apprehension, believing them to be lighted faggots hurled into the air by *.ē'rem-chàu'gala* in order to ascertain the whereabouts of any unhappy wight in his vicinity; if, therefore, they happen to be away from

[1] *Vide post* "Religious Beliefs, &c.," paragraph 12.
[2] *Vide post* "Mythology," paragraph 31.
[3] Singing, dancing, and thumping on the sounding board at that hour are, however, not displeasing to him.

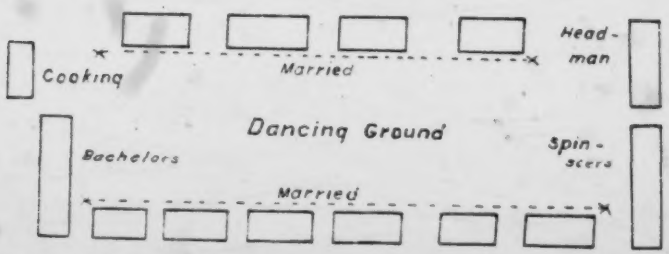
in other savages. At Government House, Calcutta, in 1895, when a party was told to sit down and weep to show the custom at meetings, in a few moments the weeping became genuine, and when after a short time they were told to stop and get up, tears were streaming down their faces. 576

General Capacities.—The Andamanese are good climbers, and rapid walkers and runners, moving with a free and independent gait, and can travel considerable distances at a time. The Jarawas turn their toes in, due to the necessity of stooping to pass along their paths through the tangled jungle. The Eremtaga are good but not remarkable trackers. The Aryoto are good swimmers and are much at home in the water. The Andamanese generally show a dexterity in getting about their thick and tangled jungles which baffles all immigrants, though in this respect the Eremtaga quite out-distance the Aryoto, and the Jarawas apparently all the others. In the jungles all shooting with arrows is necessarily at very short distance, and generally the Andamanese are good shots at short distances only, judging direction very well but distance hardly at all. They can however at the very short distance required for shooting fish allow accurately for refraction in moving water and will shoot their fish successfully even in the surf in a manner that is inimitable: this is really due to accurate judgment of direction. 481

The Andamanese are unadventurous seamen, poling and paddling their canoes with small spade paddles at considerable speed, faster than that of an ordinary ship's boat for a little distance though they could not paddle away from one in even a short chase, but they never go out of sight of land, have never been even to the Cocos (30 miles), nor to Narcondam and Barren Island, nor had they ever any knowledge of the existence of the Nicobars till our arrival. Man has a legend from Car Nicobar doubtfully going to show that the Onges from the Little Andaman once made raids on that island: but if this were true they would do so still. 502

IV. Habits and Customs.

Dwellings.—Except in the Little Andaman and among the Jarawas there are no fixed habitations, the search for easily obtained food and insanitary habits obliging the people to be nomads, for they have no practice of cultivation and domesticate no animal whatever except dogs obtained from the English. They thus dwell in various customary encampments, situate within their respective territories. At these encampments, usually fixed in sheltered spots, they erect about 14 temporary huts capable of holding up to 50 to 80 persons, arranged facing inwards on an oval plan always more or less irregular, thus— 621 [242] [231]



The central space is the dancing ground. A hut is merely a thatch about 4 feet long by 3 feet wide, sloping from 8 inches behind to 4½ feet in front, placed on four uprights and some cross-pieces without walls. In unsheltered spots and at the Head-Quarters of Septs large circular huts are built with a good deal of ingenuity, having eaves nearly touching the ground. These will be as much as 15 feet high and 30 feet in diameter. For hunting purposes mere thatched shelters are erected for protection from the wind. Close to every hut is a very small platform for surplus food about 18 inches from the ground, and in it at least one fire is carefully preserved. This is the one thing that the Andamanese are really careful about for they do not know how to make fire, though 342 [251] 372

372 they show much skill in so carrying smouldering logs with them by land or sea that they are not extinguished. Their ignorance of this fundamental requirement of civilization is shown in their fire-legend that fire was originally stolen from their deity Puluga and has never been allowed to become extinct since. Excepting guns, nothing has more impressed the Andamanese with European power and resources than the use of matches, *i.e.*, of making fire whenever required with ease.

342 In the Little Andaman and among the Jarawas of the South Andaman, large permanent huts for use in the wet season are built up of solid materials to 30 feet in height and 60 in breadth to hold the fires of 7 to 8 hunting parties, say 60 to 70 people, *i.e.*, they contain 7 to 8 fires with about 8 persons to each "fire." The Jarawa hunting camp is much the same as that of any other Andamanese and his great communal hut is built on the same principle as the larger huts of the other Andamanese.

The use of the flimsy hunting shelters and camp huts of the Andamanese is rendered possible in the wet and stormy weather so common in the Islands by the denseness of the jungle, which prevents the winds from reaching them even when close to the sea-beach and causes the rain to fall vertically upon them.

619 **Government.**—There is no idea of Government, but to each tribe and to each sept of it there is a recognised head, who has attained that position by 622 tacit agreement on account of some admitted superiority, mental or physical, and commands a limited respect and such obedience as the self interest of the other individual men of the tribe or sept dictates. There is a tendency to [554] hereditary right in the natural selection of chiefs, but there is no social status that is not personally acquired. The social position of a chief's family follows that of the chief himself and admits of many privileges in the shape of tribal influence and immunity from drudgery. His wife is among women what he is [888] among men and at his death, if a mother and not young, she retains his privileges. Age commands respect and the young are deferential to the elders. Offences, *i.e.*, murder, theft, adultery, mischief, assault, are punished by the 627 aggrieved party on his own account by injury to the body and property or by murder, without more active interference on the part of others than is consistent with their own safety, and without any fear of consequences except vengeance from the friends of the other side, and even this is usually avoided by disappearance till the short memory of the people has obliterated wrath.

421 Property is communal, as is all the land, and ideas as to individual possessions are but rudimentary, accompanied with an incipient tabu of the property belonging to a chief. An Andamanese will often readily part with ornaments to any one who asks for them. Theft, or the taking of property without leave, is only recognised as to things of absolute necessity, as arrows, pig's flesh, fire. 437 A very rude barter exists between tribes of the same group in regard to articles not locally obtainable or manufactured. This applies especially to cooking pots, which are made of a special clay found only in certain parts of the islands. The barter is really a gift of one article in expectation of another of assumed corresponding value in return, and a row if it is not forthcoming. The territory of other tribes is carefully respected without however there being any fixed boundaries.

562 The duties of men and women are clearly defined by custom, but not so as to make that of the women comparatively hard. The women have a tacitly acknowledged inferior position, but it is not such as to be marked or to leave them without influence.

771 **Religion.**—The religion is simple animism and consists of fear of the evil spirits of the wood, the sea, disease and ancestors, and of avoidance of acts traditionally displeasing to them, and this in spite of an abundance of mythological tales told in a confused, disjointed manner that is most instructive to the student of such things. There is neither ceremonial worship nor propitiation. There is an anthropomorphic deity, Puluga, the cause of all things, whom it is not, however, necessary to propitiate, though sins, *i.e.*, acts displeasing to him, are avoided for fear of damage to the products of the jungle. Puluga dwells now in the sky, but used to live on the top of Saddle Peak, their highest mountain. The Andamanese have an idea that the "soul" will go under the earth by an aerial bridge after death, but there is no heaven nor hell nor any idea of a cor-

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

them ; neither children nor adults have dilated spleens. Inhabitants of other regions where malaria incidence is high often show the same immunity, supposedly attained through local adaptation. Papuasians, Melanesians and Africans sometimes appear insensitive to malaria, although they all carry the germs of the disease. In opposition to their resistance to malaria, the Onge are vulnerable to minor lung infections and measles, which we would not consider serious.

When fever occurs, whatever the cause, the Onge recur to their universal remedy : plastering the entire body with clay, ochre, turtle fat and honey. Legs, arms and trunk are swaddled in tight bandages made of strips of ficus bark. These bandages hinder superficial blood circulation. The strips are removed from time to time and replaced after vigorous massaging of the body with hands and feet. Stomach and chest pains, as well as insistent coughing, are treated by stretching the patient horizontally on the ground and rubbing him energetically with hands and feet. The feet compress the body, with special attention to the affected part. The entire trunk is worked over in this manner, inch by inch, and the patient is carefully rotated until he has been completely turned around to receive treatment on all sides. This process lasts half an hour or more. It is a curious sight to see a man transformed into a kind of sausage, all tied up in strings and subjected to violent treatment on the bare ground, with a crowd of spectators surrounding him, obviously taking the whole performance quite seriously. The result is kill or cure ; the former helped, I should say, by rough treatment performed with the best intentions.

Exposure to hot smoke is another Onge cure for wounds and pains. I saw it applied, for instance, on Nabimbōi, the fat young wife of Maritōi, chief of Chemalē. She had scorched her right foot by stepping inadvertently on smouldering ashes. The pain made it impossible for her to sleep, so she was treated by covering the burn with the usual mixture of clay, turtle fat and honey, and exposing it to hot smoke. The smoke was provided by burning the fresh seeds of a creeper, each as big as a horse-chestnut and of the same colour, but of a lenticular shape. Incisions are made in the seeds to prevent explosion, and they are laid on the fire where they give out a thick smoke. The injured foot was held as close to the fire as possible. Recovery promptly ensued, but I would not swear that it was due to the treatment.

Fire is used by the Onge also against fever, whatever its cause. I shall quote an instance. On the night of 28 March, 1954, one of my guides, Toncootēi, a very intelligent Onge, suffered a strong attack of fever while resting in the Antiguēh communal hut in the interior of the island. I diagnosed the trouble as indigestion from immoderate guzzling of pork meat. Friends stretched Toncootēi on the ground, resting on his right side. Two lines of burning charcoal, set at right angles, outlined his back and head. Then one of the Onge started spitting on Toncootēi's hair. This was followed by vigorous rubbing of his scalp, with occasional pauses to seize his head and press it strongly with both hands. Following this, diluted ochre and clay – very hot – was spread on his thorax, throat and neck and rubbed in vigorously, whereupon the patient was brought closer to the fire. In the meantime a young fellow

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757 started slapping his hands on Toncootēi's and exposing them intermittently to
372 the fire. All this lasted over a quarter of an hour. The patient was then made
123 to lie prone, with his legs spread out, to receive a foot massage as described above, for another quarter of an hour. Torso, feet and hands were worked over, with short pauses for artificial respiration by means of compression. Subsequently his back, and particularly the sacral region, was vigorously rubbed by willing hands and feet. Three men performed this operation. Toncootēi was finally allowed to rest, between two fires kept burning all night. Sunrise found him alive, and the fever had abated, due, I think, to a good European laxative that I had persuaded him to take.

164 In March 1952, I witnessed a sad episode, followed by the death of
123 the patient, near my Labanare camp. A young mother was suffering from breast rhagades. Her baby was less than a month old, and she was also suckling
[862] another child, almost two years old, who had sharp teeth. It is a frequent
[597] kindly habit of the Onge to adopt babies; and it is customary to breast-feed them up to the age of four. Some interesting consequences arise out of this habit, but I shall not analyze them here. A minor detail: since they are allowed to suckle when they wish and are weaned so late, Onge children do not indulge in thumb sucking. Considerable reactions are spontaneously established between the two terminal parts of the digestive tube – oral and anal, as though in physiological conflict. Once more I affirm that the evidence of Onge sexual
[864] behaviour positively denies Freudian theories with regard to the sexual life of children. Furthermore, young anthropoids and primitive people behave identically in this respect.

164 The adopted baby gave the young mother nipple wounds that became
123 infected and suppurated. For lack of proper care and in unhygienic surroundings, the infection spread to the rest of her body. I found her suffering terribly
752 from pain in the breast, muscular spasm and high fever. The Onge had applied their usual external remedies to her body, from head to foot. Very tight bandages of ficus bark, renewed three times a day, were wrapped around legs, arms, trunk and abdomen. Bright red ochre – rare in Little Andaman and considered more effective because of its brilliant colour – was painted onto the afflicted breast. The poor young woman looked at me hopefully. I suggested her immediate removal to Port Blair Hospital, and sent radio messages from my camp to the Chief Commissioner, Mr. A. K. GHOSH. He responded generously by ordering a ship to call for the patient, but the journey was useless because her relations were opposed to displacing her. In March 1952 my friendship with the Onge was only starting; this will explain their refusal to follow my advice. Without proper care, in a place like Little Andaman, the patient died four days after my arrival at the camp.

756 Prescription of medicines and treatments such as those described above
[759] is not determined by specialists. Everybody submits to treatment, with general approval, convinced of its effectiveness. Witch doctors do not exist and perhaps never existed in the Andamans. Nothing, then, is known by the
755 Onge of the dances and exhibitions, commonly executed elsewhere for curative
757 purposes, that influence the patient on a psychobiological basis. As they have

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

sea itself, but to the rising and falling of the land with the recurring movements. Even between 1951 and 1952 there was a noticeable alteration in the level of the north-east coast of Little Andaman, following an earthquake in July 1951; the Onges had to move the communal hut at Tambe-e-buiè further inland, because the sea, previously twenty metres away, had begun to come right up to the hut. In several places giant trees centuries old crashed to the ground, their roots left without any foothold as the level of the land fell suddenly all along the coast. If this can happen in one year, it is hardly surprising that what now appears as an archipelago is in reality a continuous mountain chain, its levels broken and rebroken over thousands of years till the islands became separated by the sea for good, their coasts so eroded that subsequent quakes have failed to reunite them.

It is highly unwise even to attempt a landing on Little Andaman during the monsoons. Both the north-east monsoon in June and August and the south-west in November and January whip the seas up into a frenzy, but in late April and again in late September the sea is quite calm. Since both monsoons pass over vast tracts of sea, they become saturated with water vapour and bring torrential rains, not infrequently accompanied by hurricanes violent enough to strip all the leaves off the trees. After these storms the jungle, normally almost impenetrable, is made even more so by the tangle of fallen branches and the trunks of old trees torn up by the wind or the lightning. The lightning strikes the tallest trees, which may smoulder for days on end without setting fire to the sodden forest, so great is the humidity. I have often seen one of these flaming torches; the Onges, ignorant as they are of the art of making fire, take advantage of the phenomenon, as a continuous supply of burning wood is a necessity in a climate which is so damp and humid all the year round that matches become useless after twenty-four hours unless suitable precautions are taken.

Once on the island, virgin forest stretches endlessly before one in undulating waves of treetops, black and terrifying. From the tops of the trees thousands of lianas hang everywhere, winding like snakes from trunk to trunk, forming an inextricable tangle, yet somehow always elegant, binding the entire forest into one dense mass. Many of the tree-trunks reach diameters unheard of in temperate climates. Some of them have hollow cavities, treasured by the Onges as hiding-places or temporary shelters.

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The Onges are the most numerous of the three peoples surviving in the Andamans. Vigorous and apparently full of promise for the future they may well offer a suitable field for the application of eugenic measures designed to increase their numbers; this would be impossible with the Jarawas owing to their hostility towards outsiders, and the few remaining Arioto are nearly all of impure stock. If their confidence could be gained, it might be possible to encourage inter-marriage between the various groups, in the hope that fertility would increase and the ultimate total extinction of Onges, Jarawas and Arioto, would be prevented.

In the Andamanese, this physiological decline has been accompanied by cultural decadence, as my digs in the kitchen-middens all over the archipelago showed. The ancient pottery which came to light is proof enough; when one compares it with recent work the latter is indicative of secondary and not original primitiveness. The successive strata in the deposits show a gradual decline from earthenware clearly made from a very refined mix to crude ware with vegetable impurities and bits of stone left in the clay. The pots dating from ancient times were clearly well fired and the quality of the clay allowed them to have thin but nevertheless very strong walls. In the present-day ware, on the other hand, the wall has to be thick because of the coarseness of the clay, making the pots both heavy and easily broken. Moreover, firing is limited to drying the pots in the sun, and the clay is in fact only hardened when the pot is used for cooking.

Ignorance of fire-making in the Andamans may also stem from this cultural regression, as one of the effects of physiological and psychological decadence. Given the absence of magico-religious beliefs among the Andamanese, ignorance of fire-making cannot be attributed to any ritual taboo or veto. On the other hand, it is in sharp contrast to the possession of elements of cultural advance such as the bow, with highly developed arrows, the harpoon with its detachable point, and the outrigger canoe.

Few races are known, even in far distant times, which never had fire. *Sinanthropus* and nearly every fossil Man after him had fire, even if he was unable to create it and could only preserve it once received from some natural combustion. The Onges, while retaining a number of ethnic characteristics of the Palaeolithic era, have

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178 also acquired more recent additions, so that any primitive ignor-
392 ance on their part of an art so ancient and generally advantageous as that of making fire is hardly credible. One thing is, however, certain: they do not today know how to produce fire.

174 In order to explain their ignorance, one must remember the
178 surprising speed with which primitive peoples forget even essential facts, even details of their own life. They can forget their father's or mother's name, or both, and important events of less than fifty years ago are sometimes forgotten by those who took part in them. Cultural regression following the forgetting of ethnographical facts, even essential facts such as the making of fire, is a phenomenon widespread in every continent. Widely differing elements of culture spread out from a number of centres and were forced to adapt to natural surroundings often incomparably different from the centre from which they spread. Sometimes these cultural migrations led to progress, but more often to regression. Particularly in the marginal areas furthest from the centres of culture, enforced modifications were profound, with ensuing cultural impoverishment. The Andamanese, probably arriving from areas to the east, remain as survivors of a series of disasters both biological and non-biological, in one of the marginal areas which, although a natural paradise, has been most affected by adverse circumstances. It is, therefore, hardly surprising if, like the Eskimos, they no longer reflect the brilliance of the past, either biologically or culturally. A similar situation is to be found in populations much larger and more advanced than the Andamanese.

105 It is not strictly accurate to define the Onges as primitive; they should more properly be regarded as involuted. They possess certain essentials which almost entitle them to recognition as a civilized people: religious concepts are not unknown, they bury their dead, they are monogamous, and they have their own language. While they are unable to produce fire they can preserve it and know how to use it, they make excellent bows, arrows, harpoons and canoes, and they know how to produce pottery.

Nevertheless, they have no agriculture, and do not keep domestic animals except the dog, introduced only within living memory and to them a faithful friend. They have no idea of the use of metals, and make no stone implements apart from the tiny splinters used for shaving. They have never developed any graphic arts and have

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All the evidence points to this being far more than mere supposition and even today the Onges persist in their tendency to expand towards the north. In 1953 I could find no trace of a number of Onges whom I had known in 1952; the others told me they were all 'dead', but it seems probable that they had migrated to the islands further north. And in 1954 nearly all the canoes belonging to the communal huts in the south-west of Little Andaman, which I had seen in 1953, had vanished and were said to have gone with the 'dead'. It is probable that they too had migrated to Great Andaman, becoming 'Jarawas'.

This is physically quite possible. Between Little Andaman and Great Andaman the Onges have a line of transit camps, still in use, where food and water are easily available. All have a name, and I followed the line myself. With the help of their fragile but very fast canoes, and without carrying food or water (which they know will be available at the next transit camp), they can travel very quickly. They take fire with them in the canoes in the form of a burning torch and while they are at sea, unlike the lazy pace of their normal attitude to life, they seem possessed by the desire to reach the next stopping point on terra firma.

Moreover, one may deduce from the fact that the names of these transit camps are all in the Onge language that the migrations have always been from south to north. Little Andaman, formed as it is mainly of coral banks and only projecting a short way above the sea, disappears from view in the tropical mists a few kilometres from the shore; from Rutland it is invisible, and as the Andamanese only travel by sea with land in sight or when its existence and direction is well known, no one from the north would have dared to travel south into the unknown.

We have already seen that the ignorance of the present-day Jarawas as regards the sea is no bar to a hypothesis of their original arrival in Great Andaman by sea. Colebrook, a hundred and fifty years ago, actually saw them with canoes, and Gilbert Rogers[1] recorded seeing canoes on the coasts of North Sentinel very similar to those of the Onges today. The accumulation, therefore, of this evidence and the general similarity of culture throughout the archipelago all adds up to inescapable conclusions.

Even the unique dances enjoyed by the Onges are to be seen

[1] *Andaman and Nicobar Gazetteer*, 2 January 1904.

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in the division of all meat. Certain cuts are the property of the hunter, of his helpers, and of his relations and after them, in order, of the remaining members of the group; everyone knows his position in advance. Each portion is tied round with a reed fibre, which is allowed to dangle out over the top of the communal cooking-pot ready to haul the meat out when required.

In the case of pork the prized cut is one which comprises the kidneys and the surrounding fat; this fat is called *cian*,[1] and is very highly esteemed. Some authors (Brown, for example) have stated that turtles and pigs are always cut up with the head ritually pointing towards the sea as otherwise the meat would be considered inedible. This is certainly not the case on Little Andaman, and I have never seen any such directional ritual among any of the Negritos, all of whom practise division of meat according to a prescribed order of precedence. Turtles at any rate are slaughtered facing up the sloping beach simply because it is then easier to hold the beast from behind and avoid its bite. Ritual there is, but usually with a good practical basis.

More ritual attaches to the way in which the game is carried back to the camp, and the wood to be used for the cooking fire. Pigs, killed and gutted, are tied in ropes made of *Ficus laccifera* and carried somehow on the back of the victorious hunter. If it is not far to the camp he will not bother to tie up the snout and feet, but otherwise the front and back legs are tied, and one long cord joins both pairs to the snout – again a practical ritual, giving the hunter a more compact weight to carry.

Man, Portman, Brown and others all say that each type of game has to be cooked over a fire of a particular wood. My own observations showed that whereas the ritual of dissection is inviolable, the Onges always use the first wood that comes to hand, regardless of its source, taking as usual the line of least resistance. This is again in keeping with the tendency of primitive peoples to expend only the very minimum of energy to achieve their object. Their religious beliefs and superstitions are not carried to the limit, simply because

[1] It is interesting that in their very restricted world the Onges have few standards of comparison or words to express condemnation or approval, and this word *cian* is used as one of high praise, applied to inanimate objects, animals, and people alike. The precise qualities which are conveyed by the word are difficult to evaluate in the absence of fuller knowledge of the Onge language.

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252 372 824 their love of existing with as little effort as possible is paramount. Since any wood is as good as the next for making a fire, the spirits conveniently have nothing to say in the matter. In other 787 circumstances material considerations lead to quite the opposite 222 effect: when the Onges dig up roots or tubers they not only replace the earth, but cover the place with leaves, the ritual having the good practical objective of appeasing the spirits and ensuring further supplies.

171 224 The preservation of skulls for magical purposes or out of pure superstition survives mainly in Asia and Oceania. In Asia it coincides with other beliefs which demand the killing of domestic animals by strangulation. I have seen this practised along the high reaches of the valley of the Brahmaputra, particularly among the Abor, and the Nagas, and in many other tribes to the south of Tibet and China, all of whom preserve skulls. Head-hunting, found throughout southern Asia, in the islands, and as far as Oceania, is also practised in the areas where animal skulls are preserved.

171 The preservation of animal skulls, particularly bear skulls, is still practised in mongoloid peoples as far as the north of Asia; apart from the Andamans and the Nicobars, human and animal bones are preserved in many parts of Indonesia and as far as New Guinea. In the corona of small islands along the west coast of Sumatra the custom coincides with many others, as well as with certain types of huts and canoes, all present in the Andamans and Nicobars. A good example are the huts raised up off the ground on stilts, common in the Nicobars, Nias, Engano, Mentawai and various parts of Indonesia. The single-boom canoes of these areas, quite apart from their general similarity of structure, all have certain identical features, even to the method of fixing the lateral float of green wood, with pointed hardwood pegs stuck in it like spills. This, again, cannot be due to chance; it must be the effect of a very ancient cultural diffusion, now surviving only in a few specific areas.

204 531 462 The skulls preserved by the Onges have one point of interest; it is the duty of the wife to clean the trophies brought back by her proud husband and then paint them lovingly with lines of ochre. After every successful hunting expedition the wives can be seen busily painting, while the husbands look on with satisfaction.

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Queensland and (as the Cape Bedford type) elsewhere. Oars, method of fixing the booms and float – all are similar throughout the area, including the Andamans.

Even game, once caught, is treated and distributed similarly by these peoples, from the Andamans to Oceania. Cooking is done without salt, in earth ovens (whether or not fire or red-hot stones are used) very different from those of Africa and America. The Semang and Aetà of today know how to make fire by friction, as do the peoples of New Guinea, Australia and Polynesia; the Tasmans also have the knowledge to do so, but prefer to carry burning logs with them on their journeys, like the Andamanese. In certain parts of New Guinea and perhaps in some of the Pacific islands (as in the Andamans) the art of fire-making was unknown or possibly forgotten until recent times; it is said that the Papuans of the Bay of Astralobius knew nothing of the art until the middle of the nineteenth century. But the only sure information comes from the Andamans, where, whether through ignorance or loss of knowledge, the art of fire-making is unknown and fire is always carried everywhere.

Among the objects typical of the Andamans and found also among the Semang, the Aetà, and other Oceanic peoples are the digging stick and the crude hatchet. The former, used for gathering edible roots and tubers, is merely a pointed stick, but every family possesses one. The hatchet is slightly more elaborate, having both handle and blade, and like the digging stick, occurs always in virtually the same form.[1] Objects woven from vegetable fibres are also very similar in appearance – often very durable and sometimes pleasing by any standards. In some places woven breast-plates are used in warfare, but here the Jarawas differ, using single sheets of bark.

These are but a few of the many examples which one can find of this striking similarity between these widely separated peoples. And alongside cultural similarities there exist others, anthropological and physical, which cannot be overlooked. Physically the

[1] This is simply a cutting tool fixed into a natural elbow in a suitable branch. The blade is fixed into the wood near the elbow, and the branch is cut off, so as to leave a short handle. The whole thing is reminiscent of a swan's head on a long neck, and is easily turned into a crude plane or adze by revolving the blade in the haft through a right angle.

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325 islanders, in the absence of any means of working it, have not fully realized.

3 IGNORANCE OF FIRE

372 174 'The islanders' present ignorance of fire-making may possibly be the result of cultural decline, but this is not certain. In the presence of the considerable additional evidence in favour of the antiquity of the Andamanese culture it is, however, more likely that it is genuine ignorance, persisting in a pre-lithic people.

4 ABSENCE OF SALT

174 263 Although there can be no proof, it can be reasonably postulated that very primitive Man had no salt, and that in the Andamans this ignorance has persisted over thousands of years, owing to strict isolation. It is unlikely that the use of salt would have been completely lost, had it ever been introduced.

5 PRIMITIVE METHODS OF COOKING

252 172 Apart from the accidental and very recent introduction of petrol-drum cooking, the Andamanese use only the most primitive form of earth oven. This method of cooking was certainly known in the Palaeolithic era; at the entrance to the well-known Barma Grande cave near Mentone I have myself seen in the basal layers a number of stones bearing the marks of fire, too numerous merely to have formed some sort of hearth, and clearly not used to support cooking-pots, as Palaeolithic Man had none which would have withstood heat. The form of earth oven still used throughout the Andamans is undoubtedly of extreme antiquity.

6 FOOD VESSELS

415 285 172 The people of the Andamans still use for honey hollowed-out logs similar to those seen in Palaeolithic wall paintings, which also depict baskets very like those still in use throughout the archipelago. The art of basket-making can be traced back at least to the later Palaeolithic era.

7 USE OF POTTERY

323 172 As with the other Negrito peoples, pottery was unknown in the earliest culture of the Andamans. Its appearance seems from the evidence of the